

# FINANCIERS OF THE UNDERWORLD

## Craftiness Required by Men of Criminal Mind in Order to Outwit Men of Honest Occupations

BY "JOCK" BELLAIRS.

There are tricks in every trade and every trade has special tricks, but the tricks of the criminal mind by far outshadow all others.

Where the ordinary business man finds it hard to inaugurate ideas that will benefit his particular line, the mind that will not hew to the straight and narrow path is most prolific in formulating schemes for bettering himself at the expense of his fellow man.

These schemes of the unhealthy mind are so multitudinous that it is scarcely possible any one student of criminology could list them all in a book, no matter how unabridged the edition or how far afield the search. For, as a chief of police well observes: "The man with a criminal instinct thinks while the healthy minded man sleeps."

As a rule the small tradesman is the victim of the money seeking wit. But this is not always the rule. Banks, men of business, housewives, in fact all of society, suffer and the only safe guard is eternal vigilance or a determination to do as few favors as possible and none for those one does not know.

Swindling schemes rotate. Like history each sort has its day and when it has been played to death for a given period it is laid away to be shelved, perhaps years later. It would seem that some head dictated this singular condition. Police savants believe it is mere coincidence. Yet it offers food for study.

For instance, the old soap box purchase was almost forgotten until it suddenly cropped up in one city a few weeks ago and then spread from city to city to the great dismay of small grocers. It is so simple that almost anyone will succumb.

A man enters the grocery and inquires if they have any soap boxes, or similar article for sale. His wife has a setting hen and wants to use the box. Or perhaps he has something to pack, any excuse being sufficient. The man has scarcely asked the question ere a second man, or in a great many instances on record, a boy, under the tutelage of this Fagin, comes in. There are few tradesmen who have not plenty of boxes and nine-tenths of them have these either in the cellar or out in a store shed. The man is so informed and then the grocer turns to the newcomer.

"I can wait," says the latter.

So, thrown off the guard, the tradesman goes with the first caller to the cellar or shed. None of the boxes are suitable and they return to the store, the second caller having departed. The first leaves and a bit later the trader will find his cash drawer or register looted of whatever it contained. This is a favorite trick and yields good returns.

**BAD EGGS SOLD TO GROCERYMEN.**

The grocer is beset by other sharpers as well. There is the presumed farmer who appears with a faded team and a broken down wagon and who has cases of eggs to sell. The top layers are fine. Below the hen fruit is so decayed that the shells themselves seem scarcely anything but a mass of jelly. Canned goods that have been rejuvenated, frozen potatoes, "picked up at a bargain" and such things are daily offerings. The only safety is to deal with a reputable jobber or direct with the producer.

Government has protected the dealer and the consumer in the pure food laws. But before that the traffic in revived canned goods was profitable. Jobbers and others with little conscience, did not hesitate to sell the unscrupulous persons cases of, say, canned tomatoes, which had "swelled." That is, these tomatoes were not properly steril-

ized when put up. Fermentation had set in and the gases had bulged the cans out of shape. Thus the impurity of the food within was attested by the unshapeliness of the cans. The men who purchased these cans had a regular clearing house and here the work of deceiving the public and trader was carried out. The spoiled cans were punctured, the gas let out and the cans carefully restored to their original shape. Then the can was soldered at the puncture. A label was pasted on, so as to cover this solder place, after the old label had been removed and the can washed and brightened. Then these cans of spoiled vegetables were sold to grocers at reduced rates and the pub-

lic ultimately got them. Fine work of pure food inspectors in a great many of the big cities finally reduced this imposition on the poor to a minimum. At present the art is classed as a lost one.

In several Western cities there recently reappeared the "Partner Wanted" trick. This once was a favorite scheme for separating the gullible from their pelf and it was so smooth that it took the prosecuting officers of various States years to stamp it out. It was worked by regular syndicates.

In the partner wanted game there had to exist several offices. In each of these offices there was a figurehead and this man, or woman, for in many cases it developed a woman was the shrewd person in the affair, acted as the "Partner Wanted" one. The newspapers were made party to this deception. A neatly worded advertisement to the effect that a partner was wanted in a prosperous business, this partner to do the collecting and handle the cash, was placed as bait. This advertisement set forth that the applicant must be of good moral character and able to invest from \$250 to \$500 in the business.

Responses by young men eager to get a firm foothold on the ladder of business life without the formality of working the way up, rung by rung, were many. Some instances were recorded where "half interests" were sold to a dozen persons in the same office. The victim would be given a carefully word-

ed contract to sign. It looked good on the face of it but contained a "gripe" which left the victim absolutely at the mercy of the sharpers when the show was down. After this he would be put to work. He would be given a dozen or so worthless bills solicited by the swindlers from reliable merchants who desired but never hoped for collection, and with these the new partner started out. He never collected one, because they were, as uncollectable as forcing a river to run upstream. And in the course of a few days he would be "fired" and his money forfeited. When he "kicked" he found he had nothing but a promissory note on an insol-

ent sharper. And the contract he signed promised that some day he might be given back some of his money. He never received any of it. Several of these sharpers went to prison from Chicago, New York and St. Louis. The latter city had perhaps the worst gang of this sort in the world.

**OPERATIONS OF LOCK TRICK.**

Confidence tricks vary. There was the old lock trick, first cousin to the shell game and a relative of the three card monte swindle. The sharpers were in pairs. They had two little nicked locks, fashioned exactly like a padlock. One was solid as Gibraltar. It could not be pried apart with a jimmy. The other opened rather easily. The first sharper "picked up" the "sucker" and while they were strolling they happened into a third man. He joined them and presently pretended to find one of the locks. It was the one that opened easily. Then he showed it to the others and he and the first sharper set to arguing about how it opened. They switched this lock and the other back and forth till the "sucker" became interested. He wanted a look at the lock. It was the one that opened that he received. He could find no trick in it and presently found himself waging a large sum that he could open it. When the money was up, the solid lock was presented him. He was unable to force it open and his money

passed to the swindlers.

The same sort of sharper that hid "the little pea" in the crooked flange of his little finger while he pretended to sip it under the half of one of three half walnut shells, and then wagered the uninitiated could not find it, also worked this game and the three card monte. The fish pond, purse match, drop piece and the "Talking Con" were also his. The latter was simply a game of wits. The "steerer" guided a "sucker" into a saloon where other confidence men were waiting. The "steerer" and one of the other grafters began shaking the box for drinks, after the "steerer" had bought a round or two, and gradual-

ly they talked the victim into taking a hand or lending his money. He was always fleeced. The coin flip and the penny match have superseded these tricks. The flip is easy. Two sharpers against one victim gives the victim never a chance. It is worked two ways. The first is for the sharpers to toss, one heads and the other tails all the time. The odd man wins at this game and from first to last one or the other of the sharpers always matches the sucker. The second way is for each to throw heads six times running and then tails as often. In this method the odd man loses, and must pay the other two. It is seldom used.

An old game that lately has been revived and is doing duty in various cities, four victims having suffered in St. Louis, a dozen in New York and others in various cities, is known as the "valise trick." It is practiced by two men, linguists, and the prey usually are foreigners. The cupidity and vanity of mankind is appealed to in this trick. The victim is carefully selected. How this is done even the old time detective cannot tell. But the sharpers learn

from some source or other that a certain family has money, either in the bank or in the house. The sharpers get acquainted with the habits of the person most liable to handle this money. Then the game is worked. Quite by accident the victim is met by an apparent foreigner. The latter, if the intended victim be Italian, (and all nationalities have been imposed on even to staid Germans who have spent years in this country amassing sufficient to take them to the old country to visit or live their declining years) is addressed by the sharper in Italian.

"I have lots of money. My father left me millions. He died in the old country but he left a lot of creditors here and his last words were that I should bring \$15,000 to this city and pay off these creditors. He feared banks and told me to find an honest Italian who would take

charge of the money, act as trustee and aid me to find and pay off these creditors."

**SUIT CASES ARE SWITCHED.**

This is the usual line of talk. It is varied to suit the occasion, nationality or credulity of the "sucker." A second man appears and agrees with the sucker to take the charge. But the innocent looking man wanted them each to get a specific sum of money, place it with his money in the valise, sometimes only a handkerchief was used, and he agreed to let the sucker take charge of the whole, conditional that he keep the key himself. This was always agreeable. The victim drew what money he had in the bank and it was placed, presuma-

ever seeking to best you which ever way you turn.

**Where Fashions Come.**

Even the most exciting political situation will not so divert man that he can forbear to criticize woman. As usual, he is attacking our dress, and this time his mouthpiece is Sir Charles Wadsworth.

You may remember Sir Charles, as he started life as an American. He lectured at the Society of Arts on "Fashions in Art and Art Industry," criticizing those most reprehensible Philistines, those "perfidious domestic enemies," the designers of women's modes, in part as follows:

"I warn you against the insidious, if not perfidious, tactics of our domestic enemies.

"For I have noticed that, though they have not openly ventured upon the introduction of the hoop skirt or corset in the general structure of the gowns themselves, they have in a slight and tentative (though to my taste hideously ugly) form, introduced it in principle as a mere additional ornamentation in some short overskirts, which stand off from the body by means of a regular hoop, sometimes embellished in additional grotesqueness by dependent ornaments.

"Perhaps some day bells or castanets or other musical instruments will form part of the decoration, and the art theorists attached to our great manufacturers may then say that the beauty of sound has been added to the beauty of form and color."

Sir Charles held further that the designer hypnotized the manufacturer into believing that an ugly thing was beautiful; the manufacturer practiced this suggestion on the merchant, who again passed it on to the dressmaker, the dressmaker, to her customers, until the wives and daughters hypnotized their fathers and brothers and friends, and the whole world bowed down to the golden calf of eccentric fashion.

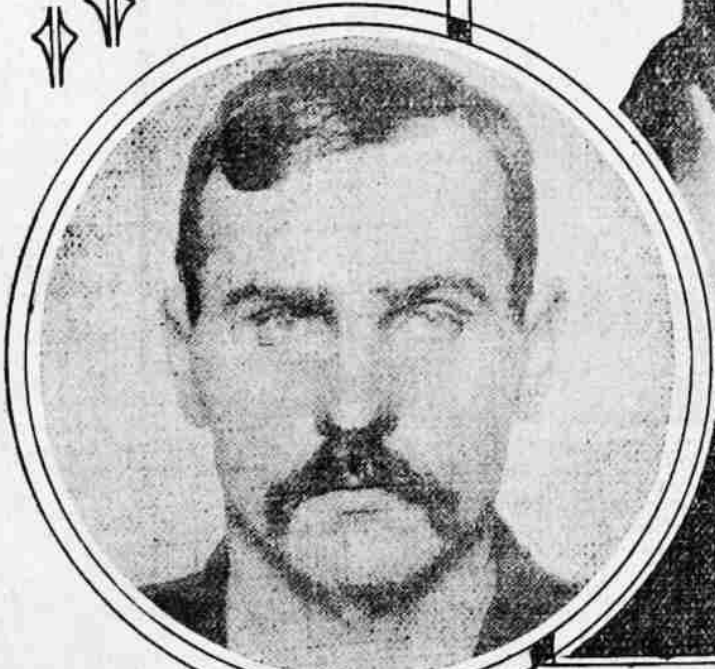
**What the Letter "F" Cost.**

Shakespeare has told us that there is "much virtue in an 'F'." But if he had lived in the eighteenth century, he would have realized there is much more virtue—or, at any rate value—in the letter "F" alone, and for this reason:

The other day the agent of a manufacturer found himself with a very large stock of goods on hand which he could realize nothing like in the market place. "You can sell for a third off the original price," he offered to take the whole line if a substantial reduction were made for cash.

The agent wired to his principal as to what discount he would allow for clear the stock, and the reply sent by telegram was: "You can sell for the second 'F' in the word 'off'." So that the telegram read: "You can sell for a third off the original price."

The agent did so, and succeeded in losing for his cash upon the transaction.



AT top—Frank H. Kent. Upper right—John J. Burns. Below, from left to right—James Marsh, Peter White and James Donohue.